

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

THOMAS B. SAULTER

DECEMBER 12, 1985

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY PAM SMOOT

ORAL HISTORY #1985-13

This transcript corresponds to audiotapes DAV-AR #3096-3097

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR





Thomas B. Saulter

December 12, 1985
National Park Service photo

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Thomas B. Saulter and Jim Williams reviewed the draft of this transcript. Their corrections were incorporated into this final transcript by Perky Beisel in summer 2001. A grant from Eastern National Park and Monument Association funded the transcription and final editing of this interview.

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ABSTRACT

Thomas B. Saulter (August 20, 1908—July 7, 1991) owned T.B. Saulter Tree Service and was hired by the Trumans to remove over ten trees after their return to Independence in the 1950s. Saulter also painted stumps, sprayed for weeds, and cleaned the gutter. Saulter discusses his first meetings with Harry S Truman, judge, in downtown Kansas City during the 1930s.

Persons mentioned: Harry S Truman, Jim Pendergast, Lieutenant Governor Busch, Bess W. Truman, Henry Bundschu, Carson George, Madge Gates Wallace, Bill Crane, Figg Jennings, and Margaret Truman Daniel.

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THOMAS B. SAULTER**

HSTR INTERVIEW #1985-13

STEVE HARRISON: Let me just hook this around. There we go. Good enough.

THOMAS B. SAULTER: Would you like a light?

PAM SMOOT: Mr. Saulter, will you please tell us your full name, address, and birth date.

SAULTER: Mother! [calling to his wife] Just a minute. I'm an ignorant man. You know what I mean? I have no education, I'll tell you that to start with. I could write a book.

SMOOT: Is that right?

SAULTER: Yes.

SMOOT: Are you a native of Kansas City?

SAULTER: No, I'm a native of Georgia.

SMOOT: What part of Georgia are you from?

SAULTER: South Georgia, Dodge County, Eastman. It was in the county seat.

SMOOT: And how long have you lived here in Kansas City?

SAULTER: Right at fifty years.

SMOOT: And Mr. Saulter, what is your occupation?

SAULTER: I'm a tree surgeon.

SMOOT: A tree surgeon? And what do tree surgeons do?

SAULTER: Well, I own the business, and I have men . . . Honey! [calling to his wife]
I'm waiting on her. She's talking to somebody.

SMOOT: Where was your business located?

SAULTER: Well, I started in down on Prospect many years ago. I went in business, I had two pair of overalls that both had patches in the butt. And it's been good to me.

SMOOT: Was this sort of like a family business?

SAULTER: No. See, I have no kids of my own. It's just like Mr. Truman when I met him. I never was a drinking man, and I killed . . . Well, I guess I'll get a . . . [calling to his wife] Honey! Where are you at, baby?

MRS. S.: T. B., there's nothing I can do to help you now, because there's nothing I'm interested in.

SAULTER: Well . . .

MRS. S.: You started it, so you go ahead with it, whatever you want to tell. I'm not sure of none of the stuff that we've got.

SAULTER: Well, you've got a question you want to ask me?

SMOOT: Yes, I was going to ask you when did you first meet Mr. Truman?

SAULTER: I met Truman in the thirties, in Pendergast days. I was driving a truck back in them days. I didn't drink, I wasn't married, so I'd go . . . I had a room down on Fifteenth and Charlotte. So I didn't drink, I'd go up . . . you know, go in the taverns, and there was three foreigners cursing these soldiers. And I beat the hell out of all three of them, and they put them in jail and me in jail. So we went in front of Mr. Truman for the hearing, you know, about the fight. So he told me, he said, "Mr. Saulter, all I ask you is if you ever catch them again doing something like that, you fight them till the man gets there." See? And that's how I got acquainted with him. He was a judge and he gave me a lot of work, he helped me get a lot of work. And Lieutenant

Governor Busch and him were good friends. The Bundschus, the Bradleys, the Carsons, the Shields, all of those people, I've had them all these years.

SMOOT: How did he help you get a lot of work?

SAULTER: I don't know. They'd call me and say, "Mr. Truman said a good word for you." See? Like Independence, I guess I've got 200 customers out there—still got them—good customers. But he knew practically everybody.

SMOOT: How would you describe Mr. Truman? Do you think you guys were really good friends?

SAULTER: I'd say he was one of the finest old men you ever met. If you'd go to work for him out there, he'd sit in the yard with you, not say a word. He'd want to give the boys a beer, but I wouldn't let him on account of the insurance. Then, what happened . . . What was I saying now?

SMOOT: Oh, you were talking about how he wanted to sometimes give the boys a beer, but you wouldn't let him because of the insurance.

SAULTER: Yes, see, he had a houseboy. [interview is interrupted by Mrs. Saulter's departure]

But anyhow, it was on Fifteenth Street. I had an apartment, lived by myself. And I'd go up on Twelfth Street and that's where the . . . weren't no fight to it. These foreigners was cussing these boys—they were drunk—and that's how I come to get acquainted with Mr. Truman. So the next day was a government rap, you know, when they . . . So anyhow, I'm repeating myself, he told me, "The next time you run into something like that, if you do," he said, "whip 'em till we get there." So that's what happened.

SMOOT: What kind of work did you do on Mr. Truman's property?

SAULTER: I trimmed the trees. A lot of times I cleaned the gutters and things like that. And all them years, I was one of the few who could walk up to the door, or gate—it's got locks on it—and it was always open house to me. Miss Bess always run the yard. He'd sit out there in the yard with me and he would . . . different conversations and we'd talk. But now his sister lives right behind there. I guess you found that out.

SMOOT: Yes.

SAULTER: Now Bess was an awful nice lady. When I'd go out there to work, she would drop everything and come out and take this or do this or do that. And I was very lucky to please her. So many tree men wanted their account so they could use it as advertisement, see? But I've never turned it loose. What I mean, it's natural they . . .

SMOOT: Did you ever cut any trees down on the property?

SAULTER: Oh yes. Oh yes, trimmed them, took them down. He's got one honey tree on it, honey bee, and I guess you'd have to wait till it got cold to trim. You know, a bee will stay in when it's [cold]. You could trim all the rest of them. And Bess would say, "T. B. . . ."—that's what they called me—she said, "Don't you fool with that tree and disturb my honey bees."

SMOOT: Where was this tree located in the yard?

SAULTER: On the northeast gate. It's still there.

SMOOT: The trees that you took down, do you remember which ones got taken down?

SAULTER: Oh, I would say I took down . . . I would say about ten trees or twelve.

SMOOT: Over what period of time?

SAULTER: Oh, I would say ten years, fifteen. But you keep them trimmed up, suckered up, and cleaned out, you know.

SMOOT: What does “suckered up” mean?

SAULTER: Take those little suckers out, you know, where the tree will look nice and clean.

SMOOT: You wouldn't happen to have any records showing which trees you took down or anything, would you?

SAULTER: No, I wouldn't.

SMOOT: So, when you would go by the Trumans' house to do work on their property, did they usually call you, or did you . . .

SAULTER: Well, I'll tell you, I met him through this disagreement with those foreigners cussing these soldier boys. And we had a . . . his court, I went in front of him, and that's how I got acquainted with Mr. Truman. But you go out there and he'd . . . if he needed something I'd go in and do it. I never did have to question it, he didn't question it. If Bess was there, she'd kind of engineer it for me.

He gave me hats. I've got stuff and hats in there and I've got checks they've gave me. I got his horseshoes out there. He was a very generous man. When I met him, it seemed like everything that went on seemed like it run into a good occupation, you know, like trimming trees and things like that. I was working for 72 cents an hour when it happened. And repeating again, I kicked them guys—there was three of them—I kicked them plumb out the back door. But from time to time, we've done the work out there. And the checks, both of them signed the checks, paid me when they wanted

to.

Now, if there's any question you're wanting to ask me, or what about them, he was a man very slow going. He wasn't in no hurry. And I become his friend and we rode around town and got in a . . . See, I always drove a truck, and he would get in the truck with me and ride around, see? That's how we become to get so much work, you see. We'd stop and see the Bundschus. I don't know whether they've come up in your past.

SMOOT: Yes, I have someone that mentioned that name.

SAULTER: See, Bundschu owns half of the . . . See, there was Judge Bundschu, and [they were] judges at the same time. Judge Bundschu and his brothers—there was about five of them Bundschus—they owned the square in Independence. One time, they wanted to put two buildings in there the Bundschus didn't own. Now, there's Carson George. I've had Carson's Funeral Home for years. But I would have never got them if he hadn't said a good word for me. I might have got them--you know, it's a question. Like Speaks, Shields, and people that he said a good word for me. I done him good work, see?

SMOOT: Did you ever go to Mr. Truman's house just to have a cup of coffee or some tea or anything?

SAULTER: Oh, we'd go in and have coffee and we'd have a time. I didn't go to visit, I went on business to work. I know I was welcome. You know it's got an iron fence—you've been out there.

SMOOT: Yes, sir.

SAULTER: That gate would open for me after he become President, and there was

never no question. Yes, I went in and Mrs. Truman would have coffee or give me a Coke. Mr. Truman would drink a beer or drink a highball. Yes! But he had a habit, he never asked me what I'd charge him or nothing, all them years. I got done, just in maybe a week, maybe ten days, your check would come in.

Now them horseshoes, they was hanging up there, and I called him "old man." I said, "Hey, old man, what are you going to do with them damn horseshoes?" He said, "You want them?" I said, "Yes, I'll take them." And I've got them hanging right down there. He gave me two hats, Stetson hats, and why he done it I don't know. I always wore bib overalls, you know, like a country boy? And he'd go and get me a hat and say, "Here, T. B., take that hat." I'd put it on and he'd say, "Take it on home with you," so I've still got them.

SMOOT: Did you ever do anything to the lawn?

SAULTER: Yes, I fertilized it, but I never killed any weeds. That's one thing . . . Well, I had the largest contract in the world on weeds with this Stalcup General Outdoor? I had eleven cities of them.

SMOOT: Do you remember what kind of fertilizer he used?

SAULTER: Phillips 66 nitrate, yes. It was dissolvable. You could put it in a spray tank and it would dissolve and you could just put it on. I've still got trucks . . .

Her son—this is my second wife—and he lives down on James A. Reed Road. He's got the account, he's got the telephone on answering service. We don't have to answer that. We don't have nothing to do but pay insurance on it. And our income is extra good. He's got his own business

and he took mine on, and he gives us 30 percent. You're talking around 30 percent on my phone, which you don't want to hear that, you want to hear about Truman. I'm telling you about myself. But I've been retired three years and we've averaged over \$16,000 a year sitting here, you know. And we gave him all the equipment, all the saws, everything, take it out.

SMOOT: Do you remember what your address was on Prospect Avenue when you first started your business? I know that was a long time ago.

SAULTER: I believe I've got a card on it, an old business card. I think these cards were made up then. She left, didn't she?

SMOOT: Yes.

SAULTER: She sure hates to go to the beauty parlor. No, this card was made up out here.

SMOOT: Okay, then these must be the most recent ones.

SAULTER: Huh?

SMOOT: This 8401 Marsh, these are Marsh.

SAULTER: Yes, well, see, I've been out here twenty-four years.

SMOOT: The card reads: "T. B. Saulter, Chopping, Removing and Spraying Trees."
[long pause] How many people helped you when you worked on the Truman grounds?

SAULTER: Oh, I averaged anywhere from seven to twelve.

SMOOT: Seven to twelve?

SAULTER: Yes. I've never been up a tree in all these years.

SMOOT: Was that because you always had someone else to go up a tree for you?

SAULTER: That's right, and then I was a commercial sprayer and I never even

sprayed. I didn't do nothing. What I mean, I was there. At Trumans' or your house, I didn't leave the men. You know what I mean. If you do good work you don't have no problem.

SMOOT: So what you basically did was you just supervised those seven to twelve persons?

SAULTER: No, I had men to do that.

SMOOT: Okay.

SAULTER: I'd go in and sit down. If Mr. Truman was home, he'd come out and sit in the yard. And he had a yard man and he'd go in—he was a colored man—go in and get coffee and a Coke for the boys. And he always gave them a tip, maybe \$5 apiece after they got done, you know, something like that. And now, Pendergast, I guess that name has come up.

SMOOT: Yes, I've heard that name, too.

SAULTER: Him and Pendergast, they didn't let me want for nothing. I didn't know too many people, but it seemed like if I run up a stump I'd call Pendergast's office. If I needed to take a tree out [unintelligible], he would okay it for me. But I think he was . . . [unintelligible], you know, out there by Truman Corner?

SMOOT: Yes.

SAULTER: Let's see, what is it, Martha Truman Road? Has that come up in your . . . time to time?

SMOOT: Yes.

SAULTER: But if there is anything, I can't say nothing but good for Mr. Truman. And Bess, she was my girlfriend. That's saying a whole lot.

SMOOT: Did you know Mrs. Truman's mother? Had you ever met her before, Madge Wallace?

SAULTER: Oh yes, I had met her. She was a very quiet lady. She never had much to say. Bess didn't have too much to say, but she knew what she wanted. And we have walked uptown together, you know, just to be doing something. Of course, after he became President we had a lot of company. You know, the FBI lived across the street, and they lived upstairs, and they lived downstairs. Have you got . . .

SMOOT: In the house across the street?

SAULTER: Yes.

SMOOT: They lived upstairs and downstairs?

SAULTER: Yes, right across the street. They would change shifts just like a man punching a clock. But he'd go uptown and visit, which I didn't do that too many times, three or four times. The boys would be busy and he'd say, "Let's go for a walk, T. B."—he called me T. B. for short—and we'd walk up there. Bess, as you say, she always had cookies and cakes. Now her sister was a real nice lady, [unintelligible]. Oh, we all became good friends. As I say again, the Carsons and the Shields, Speaks, all funeral homes. If it hadn't been for him I'd have never got them, see? And I've had some of them for around thirty years.

SMOOT: So how often did you work on the grounds of the Truman home? Did you go once a week or once a month?

SAULTER: Oh, no. Maybe if I'd go at it like today, [unintelligible], unless the ice broke some, I'd work around there about two or three days at a time. Then

I'd get them all cleaned up and take off. Maybe I wouldn't go back for six months or a year. I'd just go by and see something, I'd go ahead and do it. But I had a lot of . . . not a lot of competition at that time.

SMOOT: Do you remember who some of your competitors were?

SAULTER: Oh yes. There was Bill Crane's Tree Service, there was Figg Jennings [?], there was Motley. They wanted to do it just for the advertising so they could take it if they could, "I work for Mr. Truman," see? But I never have. If a person asks me, pins me down, you know, a new customer, I'd say, "I worked for Mr. Truman." I'd never not say it, I'd just answer their question. And like the city, I wouldn't take no city contracts. I could have got them, but I was making a lot of money and I was so proud that I had a strong business. And the people I had . . . Now, him and Lieutenant Governor Busch . . . Has he ever come up in the . . . ?

SMOOT: Yes.

SAULTER: Him and Busch was good friends. He was lieutenant governor at one time. There was Mr. Higden, the BMA Insurance man, they were good friends. I'm trying to come up with a . . . where he bought all of his clothes, down there on Main. Michael's.

SMOOT: Mr. Saulter, when is your birthday?

SAULTER: The eighth month, the twentieth day. August, the eighth month, the twentieth day, 1908.

HARRISON: Mr. Saulter, you mentioned President Truman sitting in the yard?

SAULTER: Yes.

HARRISON: Would he sit in a particular place?

SAULTER: No, he just . . . Well, he would have his yard man. If we wanted to move, he would have him move the chairs out, or I'd have my boys to move them, see?

HARRISON: Yes. Would you sit in any particular place in the yard?

SAULTER: No, no certain place. No certain place if we were working in the backyard. Now, there's a back entrance back there where the garage is, and if we was working around there, we'd sit out off . . . get out of the way. And no certain conversation, just different things, see? There was a little restaurant down there called the Bridge Cafe, and we used to walk down there, and that's where he got his breakfast a lot of times, me and him and Bess. Well, I'd get the boys started. It wasn't very far and we'd go down there and get breakfast and sit and chat.

Well, I was lucky . . . Are you still taking this?

HARRISON: Yes, go ahead.

SAULTER: Well, I don't know if I ought to . . . See, I was very young, I had a wreck up in Lumberton, North Carolina. Way back in them days you parked your truck at four o'clock on Saturday, and Sunday at four o'clock you'd go on, and I had produce, you know. So what happened, I started out. They had just got a brand-new slab, just regular two slabs. There was five colored men come down this hill, this new slab. They hit me and turned me over with 600 watermelons. It killed two of them. And the man that owned the truck I was working for, he was here. And I had to wait for a hearing on Tuesday and they dismissed it. But these two colored men was killed. It was a Model T. This car spun and beat them to death against the wheel.

I've got to tell you this, though. Tuesday I'll bet you there was fifty colored guys. The judge . . . I'm going to use this word. He said, "Any of you sonofabitches who have seen this, stay in this courtroom. If you didn't, get out!" There were two who stayed in there and was in the accident, and they was honest, they told the judge what happened. This guy had that old Model T and hit me and turned me over. If he had been that much closer it would have cut my legs off. But that's my side of life.

HARRISON: That was before you got into the tree business?

SAULTER: Oh, yes. Hell, I wasn't nothing but a young boy.

HARRISON: Mr. Saulter, I need to change the tape real quick.

SAULTER: Go ahead. I ain't in no hurry.

[End #3096; Begin #3097]

SMOOT: Mr. Saulter, you were saying something about Bess and something about Margaret?

SAULTER: Oh, Margaret. Yes, well, I'll tell you. Margaret was a very sociable girl coming up, and I never did have much conversation with her, but everybody was . . . she kind of looked up over her mother coming up, you know?

SMOOT: What do you mean when you say "kind of looked up over her mother"?

SAULTER: Well, she was at home at the time, and she would advise her mother of this or that. You know what I mean? She was a very intelligent young girl. But I never seen her go with a man or boy. I don't know where she found this guy, but she found him. I don't know how many checks I've got from them, but I have several.

HARRISON: Did you save some of them?

SAULTER: Well, I made a duplicate and I cashed them. She's got them all in a . . . Well, I think the first job we ever got [from] Mr. Truman, and a little unexpected . . . He called, or she did, and [said], "Tell Mr. Saulter to come by my place. I'm Mrs. Bess Truman." I came home and she said, "Mrs. Truman called and wants you to come by tomorrow and give her a [bid]." Anyhow, I got the business.

HARRISON: Do you remember what year that was, thereabouts?

SAULTER: Oh, it was way back there. It must have been twenty-five or thirty years ago.

HARRISON: Was it before they went to Washington or after?

SAULTER: Oh yes, I had him before he went to Washington. When he come back, well, I still had him.

HARRISON: While the Trumans were in Washington, during the 1940s, did you do any yard work?

SAULTER: Oh yes, I did. I'd just go there . . . Of course, the Secret Service men were there, but the old men and Truman's friend that would walk with him, a doctor [unintelligible], well, they would open the gate and I'd go in there and clean it up and rake it, and just leave a bill, and pretty soon they'd send me a check for it.

SMOOT: So you raked leaves? Is that what you said?

SAULTER: Oh yes. When we trim your trees we give a thorough cleaning, you know, the leaves and everything. Now, they had a yard man. He was colored, he was a good old boy.

HARRISON: Do you remember what his name was?

SAULTER: No, I don't, to tell you the truth. I should know but I don't.

HARRISON: Did you ever trim any of the bushes?

SAULTER: I trimmed everything.

SMOOT: Did you ever do anything to the flower gardens?

SAULTER: Mighty little. She had a few rosebushes and things out around the garage and on the south side. But now, you know, she liked to get out in that rose garden herself.

HARRISON: How did she keep the rose garden?

SAULTER: Very well. She knew when to cut the stems back and everything. Of course, my business was the big trees mostly, you see.

SMOOT: Do you remember what kinds of trees were on the property?

SAULTER: Elms, maples, two oaks, one hickory.

SMOOT: Do you remember where the hickory tree was?

SAULTER: Around the garage out there, if I ain't mistaken.

SMOOT: Do you remember the kinds of trees that you took down?

SAULTER: Mostly elms, one maple.

HARRISON: With regard to trimming the bushes, would the Trumans specify how they wanted them trimmed, or would they just leave that to you?

SAULTER: They left it to me. They figured if you're a tree man you ought to know. Like I say, myself, walk in there and I've got to go, "What do you want done?" After that I'd talk to them plain. I told Mrs. Truman, "Now get on in the house and leave me alone." [chuckling] Yes, that's the way I talked to her.

SMOOT: Can you remember any ice storms or windstorms, or any bad weather where you had [unintelligible].

SAULTER: No, all we had was canker worms, honey.

SMOOT: What?

SAULTER: Worms. I mean, in the forties, I'll bet you could just see them canker worms hanging out of trees. And I sprayed them. I still spray it. What I mean, my trucks do. They pay \$185 a year just for me to keep it sprayed. If I go by there . . . I don't have no kids. Her son is running it. If he goes by there and it needs something, he will go in and do it. But he'll call me. They won't let him in the yard right now. They have to call me and I okay him, see? Just like if you're working out at the Remington Arms, you've got to have a pass before they'll let you in, and that's the way they run it.

SMOOT: Are you referring to your wife's son?

SAULTER: Yes. Now, he's A. Allen Tree Service, but he's took it over and he's doing a good job. I get a check every Friday or Saturday.

SMOOT: You said the Trumans paid you \$185 a year for your services?

SAULTER: No, that was just spraying.

SMOOT: That's for just spraying?

SAULTER: Yes.

SMOOT: Okay, was that all in one lump sum, or did they pay you in installments?

SAULTER: No, I would spray in February and March with the [unintelligible] spray. And what would happen, maybe we'd send them a bill. It may be ten days or thirty days, here it would come, with both of their names on them checks.

SMOOT: Okay, so you did send them a bill on occasion?

SAULTER: Well, on the spraying, once a year. See that was for the year. Sometimes I got by with one spraying. Then again, if the bugs were bad, bark beetles I've sprayed three times for the same money. Went all up and down that street there, Old Truman Road. Her sister [unintelligible], I had them all. But if you go back to touch up one of them, you've got to touch them all. If you don't, you'd be right back out there tomorrow.

HARRISON: Do you remember when you last did any work in the Truman yard?

SAULTER: What's that now?

HARRISON: When was the last time that you did any work in the Truman yard?

SAULTER: Well, it's been about six years, I guess. The government owns that now, see, and the library, their forces, they bring them in here and they're taking care of the yard now, you know. If something comes up, probably I would get it, you know, anything they couldn't do, but they do a pretty good job.

HARRISON: After President Truman died, did your schedule of yard work change at all, or tree work?

SAULTER: Not a bit. Not a bit. I'd go there and Bess . . . You know what I mean. She was very active several years before she died. I'd take her down to the little old restaurant down there to dine. She'd get the best damn salmon patties in the world. She'd get her something to eat. She'd ride in my truck. But it was a pleasure just to be associated with them. You know what I mean? They don't owe you nothing, but it's very, very accommodating in my heart to know that I had that account.

I had some people . . . Well, I had Quincy-Illinois, the only contract

I ever had was cleaning up the city, and he helped me get that. I don't know how he done it. But I made more money working for the private . . . It's a hell of a Catholic town. The churches, Catholic people, I got a good price out of it. I could stop and take a tree down and go on about my [business]. Yes, I had a good income. I'm telling you my life now. It's just like the weed kill. I had the largest weed contract in the world for General Outdoor, [unintelligible], Stalcup. All of the advertising comes through General Outdoor. See, if you own ten locations, they have to go through General Outdoor to get the advertising, see? I had eleven cities of them. I started in Macon, Georgia, Columbus, Birmingham, Memphis, Little Rock, Saint Louis, here, and Denver, Omaha, and Council Bluffs. I made a lot of money.

HARRISON: Speaking of money, how much were you charging the Trumans? Say, there in the 1970s, how much do you think you charged them a year for all your tree services?

SAULTER: Well, it was according to how long I was there. They never asked me what I charged. I've got a few checks in there now. I guess, oh, \$1,200 or \$1,400. And I've got some in there, maybe just do a few limbs, say for \$75 or \$80, see? But it's something you count on. I didn't have to come home and worry about making money You know what I mean? I'm not saying . . . using these words, but it has made a millionaire out of me because I worked. I left here in the morning at daylight, and that's the tree business. Maybe I was going way up around the airport up there. I'd go up there and come back.

My spray business is where I made my money. I had three spray trucks and I had some good men on it. Now, we have got a record of them. Right after the first of the year, we'd mail them all a flag or a rider. It's kind of like a postcard. If you wanted your spraying on continuous . . . fill it out and send it back, you do or don't, and I've never lost but mighty few. But you let them see a bug during the year with all that spraying, you've got to go grab it.

SMOOT: Do you remember when Margaret got married?

SAULTER: I remember, but I don't remember the date, honey.

SMOOT: Okay, I was just wondering if maybe the Trumans had you come by and do something special to make sure the trees and everything . . .

SAULTER: No. No, hell, I kept them up nice anyway.

HARRISON: Were there many times that they called you special to do something, that you can recall?

SAULTER: Maybe a broken limb, an ice storm, there might be a few limbs, see? But see, I'd drive by there, which I was [unintelligible]. I was just riding around. I'd get the boys started and then I'd . . . there on Delaware, hell, I had practically all of Delaware Street and down through there. I'd just drive by it. But if I seen something in any . . . I'd just go up, maybe take one or two men . . . a broken limb. A lot of times I wouldn't even bill them. You know what I mean? They was such good customers, and if you go to dinging them, they're going to ding you out the front door.

HARRISON: You mentioned earlier, I think you said that Bess ran the yard?

SAULTER: Oh, yes.

HARRISON: What do you mean?

SAULTER: He'd sit down and he would smoke a cigar once in a while. When I smoked, averaged at that time, I was smoking from twelve to fifteen cigars a day. And he'd go get me a cigar and we'd sit there and talk. But Bess used to say, "See that limb, T?" "Yes, ma'am." And my foreman, she'd rather show it to me, but I had two crews and I said, "Show it to him." Up there and get it. At that time, his [unintelligible] painted all the wounds. Now then they've stopped all that. What happened, you paint a wound in a tree, it ain't a thing in the world but roofing compound. They'd call it tree wound dressing. First thing you know, the wood ants has went up underneath that, see? Next thing you know, here comes the borers after the piss ants. So now then they won't let us paint nothing.

HARRISON: Up there in the northwest corner of the yard, right at pretty much that intersection of Truman Road and Delaware, there's a big stump.

SAULTER: Yes?

HARRISON: And it's cut off right at ground level. Is that one that you did?

SAULTER: Yes.

HARRISON: Do you remember what kind of tree that was?

SAULTER: Maple.

HARRISON: It looks like it's probably been there quite a long time.

SAULTER: And now the honey bee tree is . . . You know old Truman Road where the gate is? [unintelligible] that big tree sits right there, plumb full of honey.

SMOOT: Oh, yes?

SAULTER: Right now. That was Bess's favorite tree.

HARRISON: Did they ever have any problems with any of the trees that damaged the house, that you recall?

SAULTER: Well, when I first got the account, there were some of them lapping, you know, like an ice storm. I trimmed them all back and straightened them up. That way I didn't have no worry.

HARRISON: You mentioned earlier cleaning the gutters.

SAULTER: Yes.

HARRISON: How did you do that, do you remember? How did you have your men do it?

SAULTER: Well, I never was a ladder man. I've got saddles and they go over here, then throw that plumb over the top of the house. Them boys just walk right up that rope. There's some parts of the house . . . Well, the gutters were pretty high. But hell, they'd just take that rope and, you know, a slip knot, and they'd throw that over there, and before you know it they could have them gutters clean.

His old car . . . He felt as much as [unintelligible]. Him and George Carson was awful good friends. George lived off of Winner Road there. And Judge Bundschu, they were good friends. But today I go out there and I'd just enjoy a visit with them. I'd go visit and never talk trees. Yes, I could show you . . . Shields down at Forty-seventh and Blue Ridge. I don't know whether you know where that is, that Freedom Home? I worked for his daddy when them boys was coming up. I've had a continuous happy life.

HARRISON: That's good.

SAULTER: I had an awful good wife, my first wife. I was getting a little age on me before I ever married her, but she was a good woman. I quite [unintelligible] Company, and I don't know what made me get in this business. I was superintendent for [unintelligible] Company. I started in as a truck driver, no education. We had Chicago, New York, Denver, but I took over the garage and the upkeep on the system. I'd go to Chicago. Maybe business would drop off and I'd take my secretary. She'd take a list [unintelligible]. And I increased his business for him. I quit him at \$1,600 a week and got this business. But a lot of days I'd bring in \$1,500 or \$1,600 in one day, you take when them bugs were running. Now today, trucks don't go out for less than \$35. That's for two trees. If they've got any more, we give them a different price. We're talking about Lieutenant Governor Busch, he's been retired several years. There's old man Higden, the BMA Insurance? You know that building that's at Thirty-first and . . . what's that, Gilmore? You know, that tall building? They own that, you see. And I've had that account for all these years. I could just sit here. I don't have to go out.

HARRISON: Well, we appreciate you taking the time to visit with us today.

SAULTER: Well, is there any question you would like for me to answer? Ask it, I'll be glad to . . .

HARRISON: Well, no, this has been real helpful. And again, like Pam was telling you, since we do manage the Truman home now and we do conduct the tours through and so on, which are free, it's really important for us to have as accurate and complete information as we can about the Trumans. And the

best way we can get that is from people like yourself who [unintelligible].

SAULTER: Well, it's just like the *Star*. They've been here twice just like you. My wife won't come up with none of that literature, the checks and . . . She's even got the bills where we sent them a bill and all that, which she says we don't need the money, but you turn it over to somebody that will make a long [unintelligible] dream out of it, you know. That's why she won't give me much time.

HARRISON: Well, if you ever decide you want to donate those to the National Park Service so they'll stay with the Truman home, you give us a call. We're interested in having those kinds of documents and things like that and we'd take good care of them.

SAULTER: Some of these days . . . See, I'm seventy-seven years old. Now, I could see a bird away over on the top of that tree. I can look down here twenty minutes and I'm stone blind.

HARRISON: I'll be darned.

SAULTER: We go out twice a day. We usually go out at ten o'clock and get our breakfast. If it's too bad we don't. And about four o'clock we go out and get our lunch. But we've got [unintelligible]. You know today's Thursday. You know where we eat today?

SMOOT: Where?

SAULTER: City Market. Today's their beef stew day. Now, you're talking about something good. We go down there.

SMOOT: Maybe Steve and I need to go there and eat.

SAULTER: Well, it's right there in the market and it's reasonable. There are a lot of

Italians in there. [makes jabbering noise] But the hell with them. I get that beef stew, I'm happy. [chuckling] Now, like here, there's seven retired old people in this block. I've got the meat and everything ready. When I cook a beef stew . . . I've got a pot—oh, it's about this big—and I cook that meat all night. Then I go to add vegetables and everything. My wife, she is allergic, she can't eat nothing but pepper. But she takes out like a carrot and a potato. I put that in there. Then, when I go to put my vegetables in there, then I got little pots like this, you know? This girl next door, she cuts my grass and she's my handy girl. I call her. She delivers little pots of beef stew for them people.

SMOOT: That's great.

SAULTER: Yes.

HARRISON: That's very nice.

SMOOT: Maybe I need to retire and move over here on Marsh Road. [chuckling]

SAULTER: Now there's a man, the oldest man, right over there. I've got an old man eighty-seven years old up here, and he always buys plants, you know, anything he wants for them. And at summertime, I don't have no trouble getting tomatoes, okra, anything in the garden.

SMOOT: Mr. Saulter, what is your address here?

SAULTER: 8401 Marsh, right there.

END OF INTERVIEW